

## HIBERNATION GENES IDENTIFIED IN HUMANS

The discovery could pave the way for human hibernation of the kind foreshadowed for astronauts in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, now 30 years old.

Human hibernation could make ultra-long-haul space travel feasible, with crews effectively put to sleep for months or even years.

The United States Army, which has been funding the research, is interested in the concept of inducing protective hibernation in battlefield casualties to keep them alive when medical help is not at hand.

Researchers in Britain are also investigating the role of genes in the mini-hibernation of Siberian hamsters, with the aim of triggering similar genes in humans to help people lose weight.

But the first use of hibernation technology is likely to be in transplant surgery, where donor organs would be preserved on shelves for weeks or months by putting them into a state of deep sleep.

After a five-year project, Matthew Andrews, Associate Professor of Genetics at North Carolina State University, has identified two genes—PL and PDK-4—which appear to mastermind hibernation. One stops carbohydrate metabolism, which ensures that the glucose that animals have



stored in their body from their last meal is preserved for use by the brain and central nervous system. The second gene controls the production of an enzyme that breaks up stored fatty acids and converts them into usable fats for fuel. As a result, the animal can tick over on its stored fat.

The researchers found that the genes can be made to work in similar ways in humans. The PDK-4 gene, for example, is switched on by starvation, when its job is to conserve glucose.

(Source: The Sunday Times, UK, 6 February 2000)

## CHINESE DOCTORS HAIL ANTI-CANCER TREATMENT

Chinese surgeons have made a breakthrough in cancer treatment after turning a patient's malignant tumour into a ball of ice, the Xinhua news agency said on Saturday.

Surgeons at Xijing Hospital, in the northwestern city of Xian, inserted a superconductive knife, two millimetres in diameter, into the tumour of a liver cancer patient, the agency said.

By forcing high-pressure argon and helium gas through the knife-point, they were able to lower the temperature of the tumour to  $-140^{\circ}$  Celsius ( $-220^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit).

"In 60 seconds, the tumour became an ice ball," the article reported, adding that "all cancer cells were killed".

"The operation took only 30 minutes. The patient felt no pain and there was no bleeding," the agency reported.

"The therapy is a breakthrough in cancer treatment," said Dou Kefeng, a surgeon in charge of the operation, who was quoted in the article.

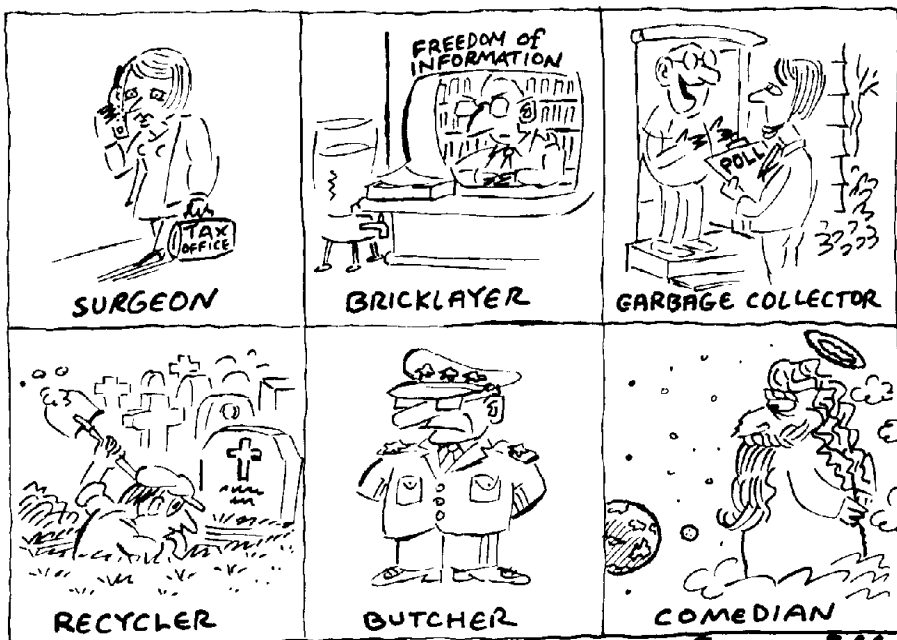
(Source: Xinhua News Agency, Beijing, 12 February 2000, via Reuters, <http://news.excite.com/news/r/000212/05/health-china-cancer>)

## AUSTRALIAN TAX OFFICE CAN LEGALLY BEND THE TRUTH

In its zeal to "deter schemes that seek to reduce any GST liability, obtain or increase any refunds of GST and alter the timing of a payment of GST", the Australian Tax Office has bestowed some awesome powers upon the Commissioner:

"For the purpose of making a declaration under this subdivision, the Commissioner may:

- (1) Treat a particular event that actually happened as not having happened; and
- (2) Treat a particular event that did not actually happen as having happened and, if appropriate, treat the event as (a) having happened at a particular time, and (b) having involved particular action by a particular entity; and
- (3) Treat a particular event that happened as (a) having happened at a time different from the time it actually happened, or (b) having involved particular action by a particular entity, whether or not the event



# ... GLOBAL NEWS ...

involved any action by that entity." (See Section 165-55, Goods and Services Tax Act, Australia, June 1999.)

When Australian law empowers the Tax Office to replace the facts with fiction and to rule by that fiction, we are in trouble. What next? The police?

(Source: Jeff Corbitt, Newcastle Herald, NSW, Australia, 27 July 1999)

## ASPARTAME SWEETENER DAMNED BY SECRET REPORT

Aspartame, the artificial sweetener in bestselling brands like NutraSweet, Equal, Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi, was condemned as dangerous and potentially toxic in a report compiled in the early 1980s by some of the world's biggest soft drink manufacturers—who now buy tonnes of it to add to diet drinks.

The documents were unearthed last week under Freedom of Information legislation. This followed a decision by researchers at King's College in London to study suspected links between aspartame intake and brain tumours.

The 30-page aspartame report was drawn up under the auspices of America's National Soft Drinks Association (NSDA), whose governing body at the time included senior Coca-Cola and Pepsi executives. It was produced before the artificial sweetener aspartame had been approved for use in the United States.

The report states: "We object to the approval of aspartame for unrestricted use in soft drinks." It then lists ways in which aspartame is believed have a direct effect on brain chemistry, including the synthesis of vital neurotransmitters such as serotonin. Thus, it warns, aspartame can affect the workings of the brain, change behaviour and even encourage users to eat extra carbohydrates—so destroying the point of consuming diet drinks.

Aspartame, made by the multinational giant Monsanto and marketed under the name NutraSweet, is 200 times sweeter than sugar and is used in many popular low-calorie foods and drinks. It has been declared "safe" in a number of studies and has been approved for use in both the United States and Europe.

Other papers obtained with the NSDA documents show that the US Food and Drug Administration

also had misgivings. Despite this, the FDA went ahead and approved aspartame anyway.

With Coca-Cola's recent announcement that it will soon retrench 6,000 employees, perhaps the company is hiring a barrage of lawyers instead, to prepare for the avalanche of aspartame litigation that's about to come down upon it.

(Source: The Sunday Times, UK, 27 February 2000)

## US ARMY 'PSYOPS' AGENTS DEPLOYED TO CNN NEWS

According to Major Thomas Collins of the US Army Information Service, CNN (Cable News Network) regularly employs military specialists in "Psychological Operations" ("PsyOps").

"PsyOps personnel, soldiers and officers have been working in CNN's headquarters in Atlanta through our program, 'Training with Industry'," said Major Collins in a telephone interview with *Trouw*, adding, "They worked as regular employees of CNN. Conceivably, they would have worked on stories during the Kosovo War. They helped in the production of news."

The temporary outplacement of US Army PsyOps personnel in various sectors of society began a couple of years ago. Contract periods vary from a couple of weeks to one year.

CNN is the biggest and most widely viewed news station in the world. The intimate liaisons with Army PsyOps specialists raise serious doubts about CNN's journalistic integrity and independence.

The military CNN personnel belonged to

the air-mobile Fourth Psychological Operations Group, stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. One of the main tasks of this group of almost 1,200 soldiers and officers is to spread "selected information".

US PsyOps personnel use a variety of techniques to influence media and public opinion in armed conflicts in which American state interests are said to be at stake. Recent examples include the Gulf War, the Bosnian War and the crisis in Kosovo.

CNN spokeswoman Megan Mahoney said: "I don't believe that we would employ military personnel; it doesn't seem like something we would normally do."

So far, CNN senior officials have not commented on the allegations.

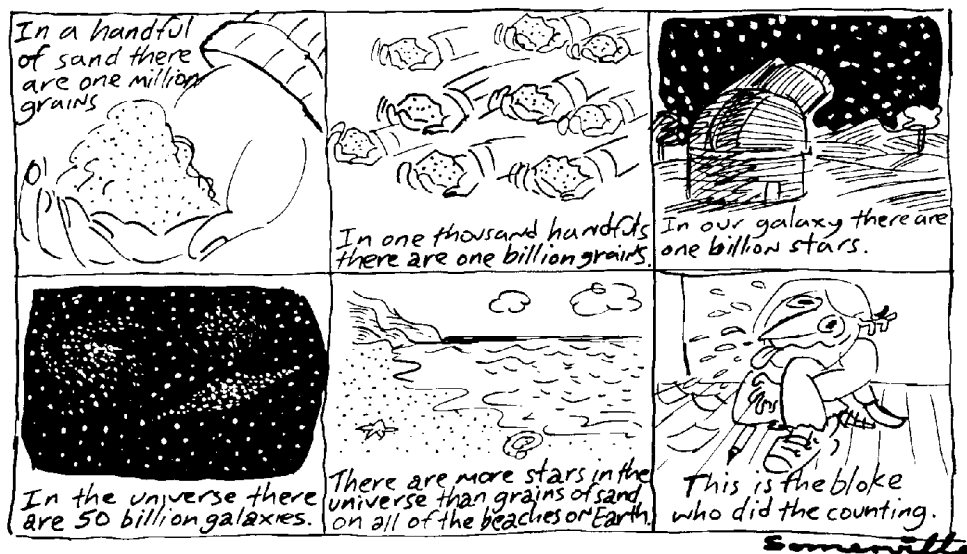
(Source: By Abe de Vries, *Trouw*, 21 February 2000; translated from Dutch by an Emperor's Clothes volunteer, website [www.tenc.net/emperors-clothes/](http://www.tenc.net/emperors-clothes/))

## US NAVY'S LOW-FREQUENCY ACTIVE SONAR IS LETHAL

The full name is SURTASS LFAS, a US Navy acronym for Surveillance Towed Array Sensor System / Low-Frequency Active Sonar.

Often referred to as LFAS or LFA Sonar or just LFA, it is basically a loud, underwater sonar designed to detect today's quiet submarines but whose effects on marine life are unknown to science.

Broadcasting at up to 240 decibels (dB), this low-frequency sound can travel thousands of kilometres and can injure, deafen and even kill marine mammals—as well as



# ... GLOBAL NEWS ...

humans—who are too close to the source.

What started in the 1980s as a US Navy project to detect a new class of so-called "silent submarines", remained virtually unknown until 1995, when, with LFA Sonar on the verge of being deployed in 80 per cent of the world's oceans, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) became aware of the program and of the fact that the Navy had never filed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

NRDC sent a letter to the Navy, threatening to sue because the Navy was violating numerous environmental laws. To avoid a lawsuit from NRDC, the Navy decided to file an EIS on LFAS.

In 1997 and 1998, the Navy conducted tests of LFA Sonar on blue, fin, grey and humpback whales off the coasts of California and the Big Island of Hawai'i—in a national marine sanctuary for humpback whales. The test levels were always much lower than the 240 dB level at which the Navy wants to deploy LFAS.

In March 1998, the Navy came to the waters off the Big Island of Hawai'i and began broadcasting LFAS. Almost immediately, whale-watch boat captains began reporting whales leaving the test area, and these reports were filed with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

A swimmer who was in the ocean at the time of one of the tests was "ensoufied" by the LFAS transmission at 120 dB. (Note that since the decibel scale increases exponentially, the proposed 240 dB deployment level is *not* twice the 120 dB

that this swimmer was exposed to, but—and this is not a typo or a miscalculation—it is one trillion times as strong!) She was diagnosed within an hour of her exposure as having symptoms comparable to acute trauma.

The damage caused to humans and wildlife has resulted in the filing of three separate lawsuits and is spurring concerned people from many countries into action.

(Source: Margaret Mead, 25 February 2000, with credit to the Stop LFAS Worldwide website, <http://manyrooms.com/> and other links)

## SOUTH AFRICA CALLS EXPERTS TO REASSESS HIV=AIDS THEORY

An expert panel, which will reassess various aspects of AIDS science, is to be convened by South African Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, according to her special adviser, Dr Ian Roberts.

"We are looking into the feasibility of getting an international expert panel to look into AIDS in Africa and the way forward. It will be internationally representative and made up of experts from the US, Europe and Africa," Dr Roberts told the South African Press Association (SAPA).

The new panel would be reappraising the scientific evidence that HIV causes AIDS.

Debate in scientific circles over AIDS has been raging since the viral cause of AIDS was proposed in 1984, with mainstream science and medical journals consistently refusing to publish articles by the so-called AIDS dissidents, who, in 1991,

formed a coalition calling for a reappraisal of AIDS.

Tshabalala-Msimang's initiative to convene an international panel to reassess AIDS science is a first.

(Source: Ben MacLennan, SAPA, 28 February 2000, e-mail [Ben@sapa.org.za](mailto:Ben@sapa.org.za))

## COLOUR PHOTOCOPIERS DO HAVE TRACKABLE ID CODES!

Last issue in Global News, we ran an item from J.J. Johnson who was refused permission to make a colour photocopy of his driver's licence (to deal with an identification problem with his local telephone company). A Kinko's (copying centre) worker reportedly told him that making such a copy was "illegal" and that any such copy could be traced to the store through a hidden ID code.

According to a *Privacy Forum Digest* special report: "...it's been well known for years—no secret—that 'invisible' IDs are imprinted on virtually all color xerographic output, from (apparently) all of the manufacturers. But for persons outside of 'the trade', this hasn't been as widely known (even though the issue goes back to the early '90s, and the topic has appeared in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*)."

As explained in the report: "Modern systems, which are now reportedly implemented universally... [encode] the ID effectively as 'noise' repeatedly throughout the image, making it impossible to circumvent the system through copying or printing over a small portion of the image area or by cutting off portions of printed documents.

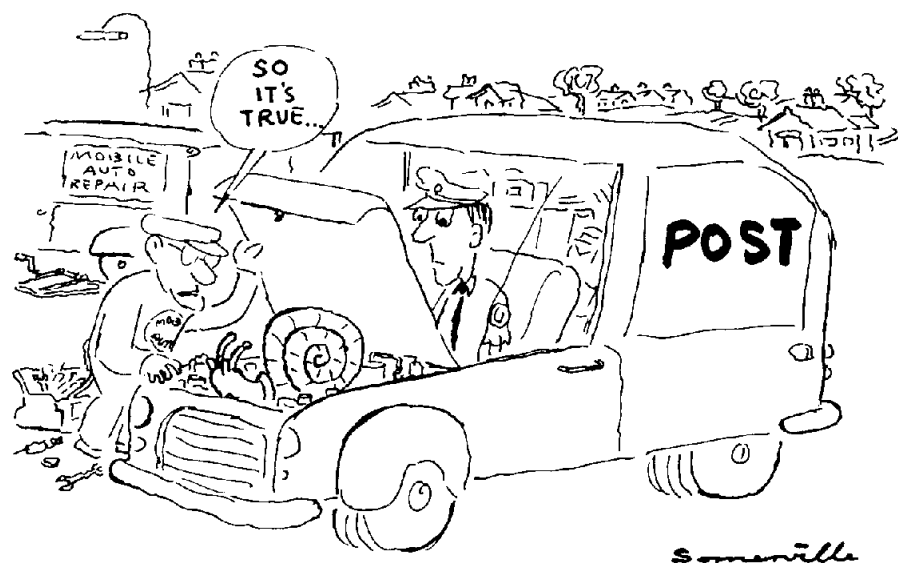
"To read these IDs, the document in question is scanned and the 'noise' decoded via a secret and proprietary algorithm."

(Source: Privacy Forum Digest, vol. 8, issue 18, 6 December 1999, webpage [www.vortex.com/privacy/priv.08.18](http://www.vortex.com/privacy/priv.08.18))

## UK LEGISLATION COULD MAKE INTERNET CAMPAIGNS ILLEGAL

Continuing with a definition first brought in by the Thatcher government to allow police to tap the phones of union members in the 1985 British miners' strike, the proposed Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIP) Bill specifically designates "conduct by a large number of persons in pursuit of a common purpose" to be "a serious crime" justifying an interception of their private e-mail correspondence.

Under the Bill, police will be able to



obtain facilities to spy on the private e-mail of people and protest groups, and Internet service providers (ISPs) will have to build "interception capabilities" into their systems. When served with an "interception warrant", ISPs will be forced to intercept private e-mail and convey the contents to the police or various intelligence services. Refusal to comply with a warrant will carry a maximum prison sentence of two years. "Tipping-off" someone that their e-mail is being read will be punishable by up to five years' imprisonment. This also applies to informing anyone not authorised to know about the interception warrant.

The warrant will initially be served on a named individual within an ISP. That person may inform only those other people whose help they need to implement the warrant; and those people, in turn, will face the same penalties for tipping-off.

A separate section of the Bill deals with encryption. This provides for "properly authorised persons (such as members of the law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies) to serve written notices on individuals or bodies, requiring the surrender of information (such as a decryption key) to enable them to understand (make intelligible) protected material which they lawfully hold, or are likely to hold".

Such an order can be served on anyone who "there are reasonable grounds for believing" has an encryption key. They could face two years behind bars for not revealing the key, and are also subject to the same possible five-year prison sentence as ISPs for informing someone that attempts are being made by the authorities to read their e-mail. This section of the Bill has been widely condemned by civil liberties lawyers as reversing the fundamental right of a person to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and will almost certainly be challenged using the European Convention on Human Rights.

The British Bill is part of long-term plans that have been in development since 1993, to give law enforcement bodies around the world the ability to intercept and read modern digital communications.

The RIP Bill represents a serious threat to the rights of those who use the Internet to campaign on social justice issues, both in Britain and internationally. Anyone who wants to help in this campaign, please contact [ir@gn.apc.org](mailto:ir@gn.apc.org).

(Source: GreenNet statement, 22 February 2000, [www.gn.apc.org/activities/ir/](http://www.gn.apc.org/activities/ir/))

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE 'INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY'?

by Norman Solomon

A few numbers tell a dramatic story about extreme changes in media fascination with the Internet. After the 1990s ended, I set out to gauge how news coverage of cyberspace shifted during the last half of the decade. The comprehensive Nexis database yielded some revealing statistics:

- In 1995, media outlets were transfixed with the Internet as an amazing source of knowledge. Major newspapers in the United States and abroad referred to the "information superhighway" in 4,562 stories. Meanwhile, during the entire year, articles mentioned "e-commerce" or "electronic commerce" only 915 times.

- In 1996, coverage of the Internet as an "information superhighway" fell to 2,370 stories in major newspapers—about half the previous year's level. At the same time, coverage of electronic commerce nearly doubled, with mentions in 1,662 articles.

- For the first time, in 1997 the news media's emphasis on the Internet was mainly to tout it as a commercial avenue. The number of articles in major newspapers mentioning the "information superhighway" dropped sharply, to just 1,314. Meanwhile, the references to e-commerce gained further momentum, jumping to 2,812 articles.

- In 1998, despite an enormous upsurge of people online, the "information superhighway" concept appeared in only 945 articles in major newspapers. Simultaneously, e-commerce became a media obsession, with those newspapers referring to it in 6,403 articles.

- In 1999, while Internet usage continued to grow by leaps and bounds, the news media played down "information superhighway" imagery, with a mere 842 mentions in major papers. But major newspapers mentioned e-commerce in 20,641 articles.

How did America's most influential daily papers frame the potentialities of the Internet? During the last five years of the 1990s, the annual number of *Washington Post* articles mentioning the "information superhighway" went from 178 to 20, while such *New York Times* articles went from 100 to 17. But during the same half-decade, the yearly total of stories referring to electronic commerce zoomed, rising in the *Post* from 19 to 430 and in the *Times* from 52 to 731.

In other prominent American newspapers, the pattern was similar. The *Los Angeles Times* stalled out on the "information superhighway", going from 192 stories in 1995 to a measly 33 in 1999; while *Chicago Tribune* articles went from 170 to 22. Meanwhile, the e-commerce bandwagon went into overdrive: the *LA Times* accelerated from 24 to 1,243 stories per year, while the *Chicago Tribune* escalated from 8 to 486.

Five years ago, there was tremendous enthusiasm for the emerging World Wide Web. Talk about the "information superhighway" evoked images of freewheeling, wide-ranging exploration. The term suggested that the Web was primarily a resource for learning and communication. Today, according to the prevalent spin, the Web is best understood as a way to make and spend money.

The drastic shift in media coverage mirrors the strip-malling of the Web by investors with deep pockets. But mainstream news outlets have been prescriptive as well as descriptive. They aren't merely reporting on the big-bucks transformation of the Internet; they're also hyping it—and often directly participating. Many of the same mega-firms that dominate magazine racks and airwaves are now dominating the Web with extensively promoted sites.

Yes, e-mail can be wonderful. Yes, the Internet has proven invaluable for activists with high ideals and low budgets. Yes, Web searches can locate a lot of information within seconds. But let's get a grip on what has been happening to the World Wide Web overall.

The news media's recalibration of public expectations for the Internet has occurred in tandem with the steady commercialisation of cyberspace. More and more, big money is weaving the Web, and the most heavily trafficked websites reflect that reality. Almost all of the Web's largest-volume sites are now owned by huge conglomerates. Even search-engine results are increasingly skewed, with priority placements greased by behind-the-scenes fees.

These days, "information superhighway" sounds outmoded and vaguely quaint.

The World Wide Web isn't supposed to make sense nearly as much as it's supposed to make money. All glory to electronic commerce. As Martha Stewart rejoiced in a December 1998 *Newsweek* essay: "The Web gives us younger, more affluent buyers."

Establishing a pantheon of cyber-heroes, media coverage has cast businesspeople like Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and Steve Case as great visionaries. If your hopes for the communications future are along the lines of Microsoft, Amazon.com, and America Online, you'll be mighty pleased.

(Source: Written by Norman Solomon, author of *The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media*; published in *Z Magazine*, February 2000)